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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000269

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/RSA, AND AF/SPG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2019

TAGS: PREL PGOV AU SU

SUBJECT: AU SUMMIT -- AF ACTING A/S CARTER MEETS WITH
SUDANESE FOREIGN MINISTER DENG ALOR

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Begin Summary: The Ambassador, AF Acting Assistant Secretary Phillip Carter, Acting USAID Assistant Administrator Earl Gast, and Sudan Programs Group Timothy Shortley met with Sudanese Foreign Minister Deng Alor January 31 on the margins of the AU Summit in Addis Ababa. Deng described a Libyan-inspired bid to strengthen AU member states, opposition to the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment of Sudanese President Bashir but indicated support was shallow. He urged the United States not to regard the Sudanese National Congress Party as a monolith, encouraging the USG to take resolute action first and to talk later, and calling President Obama part of the solution to Sudan's problems.
End Summary.

¶2. (C) Carter said the USG has been taking stock of the situation not just in Darfur, but with respect to implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between North and South, and bilateral issues including counterterrorism cooperation. He said both the United States and Sudan want the same thing: to see a Sudan at peace with itself and with its neighbors so we can get on with sustainable economic development and other issues of common concern. He said the USG perceives a distinct lack of enthusiasm and a paucity of ideas on the part of the Sudanese National Congress Party (NCP) for tackling the problems that stand before it.

¶3. (C) FM Alor said the NCP is at a crossroads, with serious divisions within the party. Alor reported that Vice President Taha believes that for the time being, President Bashir is backed by the Sudanese army and therefore remains firmly in control. Taha stressed to Alor that if the International Criminal Court issues an arrest warrant for Bashir o/a February 7, as expected, it is possible the army will begin to have second thoughts about its commitment to Bashir after four to six months. Deng predicted if and when Bashir does move off center stage, the army, like the NCP, will face increased internal pressures. On the other hand, he reported, National Intelligence Director Salah Ghosh had recently gone through a list of senior army officers and found not a single name he deemed competent to replace Bashir. Moreover, the army does not want to be in control unless it gets some sort of a signal from the NCP: it knows coups are not popular these days, but FM Alor imagined some in the army could envision a scenario whereby power is seized while a schedule to hold elections is immediately laid forth.

¶4. (C) FM Alor assured Carter, in spite of what has been said by some in the regime and in the army, he is confident the army will continue to protect civilians and the diplomatic community in the wake of an ICC warrant. Carter said the NCP is at a watershed. On the one hand, it could follow a positive dynamic by supporting UN/AU Joint Mediator for Darfur Bassole

and the peace process, by backing humanitarian access for the delivery of food and other aid in Darfur, by proposing unilateral concrete measures such as a moratorium on bombing and offering a peace proposal amenable to rebel groups, by moving forward with implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and preparing the nation for elections. On the other hand, it could continue with the status quo and head steadily and ever more rapidly downhill. Carter noted Sudan's reaction to the ICC indictment would be watched closely.

¶5. (C) Alor described various efforts by the southern Sudan People,s Liberation Movement (SPLM) to propose initiatives on Darfur, and how these efforts had been largely rebuffed by the leadership within the NCP. He said he had told the rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) the SPLM supported JEM's grievances but did not support its Muslim exclusiveness. JEM said they now spoke for all Sudanese, but Deng was not wholly convinced. Carter encouraged Deng to keep in contact with JEM and Sudan Liberation Movement factions. Shortley said the USG is looking for opportunities, but with repeated broken promises over the past 20 years, another agreement is not going to change anything. Carter criticized the bombing raids in Darfur, decrying the loss of civilian life and the disproportionate response to rebel provocation.

¶6. (C) Deng said AU member states were meeting as he spoke to try to craft a stronger statement against the ICC, under the offices of Libya. The draft statement commits the AU member states to say they will not respect the decision of the ICC. He noted many African leaders are just being diplomatic in going along with efforts to derail the ICC, but that ultimately they will not sign on to Sudan,s proposal. Sudan meanwhile,

ADDIS ABAB 00000269 002 OF 002

objects to the inclusion of language condemning impunity. Turning back to domestic politics, the NCP looks at the SPLM as spoilers and are seeking a way to hang onto power for two more years after which time the South will have voted in the referendum to split with the North. According to this calculus, the split would leave the NCP in charge of a smaller but more manageable Sudan. In terms of strategy, he suggested the United States consider engaging certain people within the NCP. If the USG can drive a wedge between Nafie al Nafie from President Bashir, for example, it might have some positive effect in breaking the status quo. Some within the NCP will move forward if they think they have the West's support.

¶7. (C) Deng also addressed the complexities of Sudan,s external relations. He described a recent visit to Sudan by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, during which Mubarak spoke in strong terms about maintaining unity and dealing forthrightly with the ICC. The SPLM is very close to Mubarak now, Deng said, which is a big change from the past when the Egyptian leader strongly identified with the NCP. Mubarak had told him in private conversation the Sudanese Islamic Movement is the most dangerous group in the region: they have tried to kill him, and are responsible for a lot of the violence in Somalia, Chad and for support to the Lord,s Resistance Army; they must go. Deng also said he had met with Senegalese President Wade: Wade told him he had pressed Bashir to deal with the ICC, and spoke of a letter he had received from ICC President Ocampo, saying if Bashir had taken some action regarding the two previous indictees, he would not have been indicted himself. Deng noted 27 African countries are signatory to the ICC, and would be reluctant when pressed to choose between defiance of the international court and condemnation of Bashir.

¶8. (C) Deng characterized the situation in Sudan as bad, exclaiming -- a solution has to be found. U.S. President Obama is part of the solution. The United States has a lot of history from the past Administration, Deng said. Alor recommend that the same tactics are not followed. "The United State must act", he said. Carter retorted that some early statements of the Obama Administration indicate it may be even tougher than the previous one. "Just take some action", Deng said, "then talk". Deng concluded the

meeting by inquiring if Carter would be willing to meet with Bashir's advisors on the following day, to which Carter replied in the affirmative.

¶9. (C) COMMENT: Deng is a southerner, who literally grew up fighting the North. Though Foreign Minister, he clearly sees himself as an outsider. His analysis of the situation both within Sudan and internationally must be viewed with a critical eye, but his opinion is significant, and useful inasmuch as it presents a different optic on a regime which does not appear to know quite in which direction it wants to head, and is to an extent caught in the headlights of the ICC indictment of Bashir. END COMMENT

¶10. (U) Acting A/S Carter approved this message before departing Addis.

YAMAMOTO